

passion for independence with a zeal for democracy. Indeed, May 20, paralleling America's own 4th of July, celebrates the same democratic fervor that Americans fondly recall whenever we reflect on our own sorely won freedom.

Unfortunately, the promise of a lasting and viable democracy would never be fully realized in Cuba. As we know all too well, the veil of "freedom" Fidel Castro promised with his Revolution soon descended into one of the worst tyrannies in modern history. July 26, a date sanctified by Castro as a symbol of his own political triumph, replaced May 20 as the new national holiday, wiping away all memories of democratic hope.

The Cuban people watched in stunned silence as they witnessed the dismantling of their republic and the institution of Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism. Soon the Soviet juggernaut had extended its iron fist across the ocean, marking the dawn of crushing religious, political, and artistic repression and the emergence of a culture of fear, theft, stagnation, and moral bankruptcy. After suffering countless state-sanctioned crimes throughout the decades, the indomitable will and courage of the Cuban people keep the hope of freedom and democratic change alive as an achievable goal.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly serve the cause of democracy as a United States Congresswoman, and continue the fight against the Castro regime and the oppression of the Cuban people. Ever cognizant of Cuba's plight, I feel compelled to call this oppression to your attention this day, May 20, 2004, a day representing freedom, and reminding us all of the tyranny that has usurped freedom.

Mr. Speaker, this 20th of May, liberty has once again eluded the Cuban people. Yet, I know that soon May 20th will once again stand as an affirmation of Cuban democracy, as a new birth of freedom, as a celebration of victory over dictatorship. Positive change will no doubt come, and we work toward it every day. I unite my thoughts and prayers with the Cuban people, and ask them to believe: a true 20th of May celebration is on the horizon—Cuba will once again be free.

TRIBUTE TO PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JESSE BURYJ

HON. RALPH REGULA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a dedicated soldier and citizen from my district in Ohio who gave his life defending our country. Private First Class Jesse Buryj (pronounced booty) died protecting a U.S. Army checkpoint in Iraq.

A graduate from McKinley High School in Canton, Ohio, he was a member of the marching band all four years and an outstanding citizen to his community. Growing up he served as a member of the Canton City Police Youth Corps with the lifelong dream of becoming a police officer in his hometown. Upon learning the age requirement to become a police officer was twenty-one years, he decided to join the army to serve his country until he could join the police force.

Pfc. Jesse Buryj served as a Military Police Officer for the Army and displayed great cour-

age and dedication during his tour of duty. He died saving the lives of three of his comrades in Karbala, Iraq. He will be remembered as a hero to those men in Iraq and to all who knew him.

I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to his mother, father, sister, wife and all of his family and friends who are now mourning the loss of his life.

I pray for the safe return of all of our servicemen and women and thank them for the sacrifice they make every day defending our country.

HONORING COLONEL DEAN E. DETAR USAF (RET.) FOR HIS HEROISM AND LEADERSHIP

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Dean E. DeTar of Azle, Texas, for his combat heroism in Vietnam, and his leadership as National Commander of the Legion of Valor for the year 2003–2004.

The Legion of Valor of the United States of America, Inc. traces its heritage to the founding of the Medal of Honor Legion in 1890 by Medal of Honor recipients from the Civil War. In later years, recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Air Force Cross were made eligible for this elite organization, and those medals were authorized by Congress for extraordinary heroism in combat against enemy forces.

COL DeTar received the Air Force Cross for his extraordinary heroism in Vietnam on March 21, 1970, while leading a force of twenty-nine aircraft against one of the most heavily defended enemy locations in Southeast Asia to successfully rescue a downed airman.

COL DeTar's other U.S. decorations include the Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak leaf clusters; Air Medal with fifteen oak leaf clusters; Purple Heart Medal; and Air Force Commendation Medal, plus numerous USAF service medals and skill badges; and foreign decorations. COL DeTar will conclude his term of office as National Commander of the Legion of Valor by presiding over that distinguished organization's 2004 annual meeting to be held in Fort Worth, May 19–23.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to commend COL Dean E. DeTar to my colleagues for his outstanding patriotism during his exemplary military career which included combat heroism in Vietnam. Since his retirement from active duty, he has shown devotion to the membership of the Legion of Valor and leadership as National Commander during the past year.

HONORING COLONEL FRANK S. VAJDA, MASON DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS MAN OF THE YEAR

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Colonel Frank S. Vajda on winning the Mason District Council of Civic Associations' Man of the Year award. This special honor is truly well-deserved.

Colonel Vajda first relocated to Fairfax County following his retirement from the United States Air Force after 28 years. He quickly became active in both volunteer and community activities, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving Fairfax County. Currently a member of the Court of Camelot Civic Association, Colonel Vajda has also served the organization as president. Moreover, Colonel Vajda founded and continues to orchestrate Camelot's annual holiday charity fund drive in support of the Children's Hospital.

With community safety as a top priority, Colonel Vajda has served on the Camelot Neighborhood Watch Group for the past 15 years. As the organization's current coordinator, Colonel Vajda has tirelessly upheld the highest standards of care in the nation's oldest continuously active watch group. Furthermore, he organized and promoted the first park watch group at Pine Ridge, a local neighborhood park. Stemming from Mr. Vajda's efforts, the Park Authority, the Fairfax County Police, and the Rose Purple have effectively established the county-wide PARKWATCH system.

Since 1997, Colonel Vajda has notably contributed to the Friends of Mason District Park as a member of the Steering Committee. His other efforts include acting as a park volunteer for the Mason District Park Festival, the Spring Egg Hunt, and the Spotlight by Starlight summer concert series. Colonel Vajda's actions have ensured that all of these events were carried out in a safe and secure environment.

In 1998, Colonel Vajda was selected as the Mason District Representative to the Public Safety and Park Bond Referendum Committee. On this committee, his duties included speaking commitments informing county voters as to the purpose of the bonds during many speaking commitments. In 2001, Colonel Vajda extended the scope of responsibilities upon his appointment to the Park Authority Board. He continues to maintain the highest standards of service and dedication to this group.

Throughout his accomplished career of service, Colonel Vajda has received numerous awards including the 1998 Elly Doyle Park Service Award on the Pine Ridge Park Green Team.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Colonel Vajda for his extensive service to the Mason District. His contributions and efforts are much appreciated and greatly admired. I call upon my colleagues to join me in congratulating Colonel Vajda on his award and in wishing him the best of luck in all future endeavors.